

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2210

E.O. 11652: GDS
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SUBJ: LIBERATION TIGER MOVEMENT TERRORIST ACTIVITIES

1. SUMMARY: LIBERATION TIGER MOVEMENT (LTM) OVER PAST FEW WEEKS MAY HAVE ADOPTED MORE PRONOUNCED STRATEGY OF TERRORISM. FIVE ASSASSINATIONS IN PAST SEVERAL WEEKS ARE ATTRIBUTED TO LTM. LTM HAS CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOUR OF THEM, BUT LTM INVOLVEMENT HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED. NONETHELESS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED NEW MEASURES FOR THE NORTHERN AND EASTERN AREAS TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. LIBERATION TIGERS

LTM IS A SMALL, HARD-CORE GROUP OF MILITANT YOUNG TAMIL SEPARATISTS, ESTIMATED AT FEWER THAN 100, WHO OPERATE IN NORTH, PRINCIPALLY IN JAFFNA. IT IS A SPIN OFF FROM THE TAMIL UNITED LIBERATION FRONT (TULF) AND REPORTEDLY RECEIVES SUPPORT FROM A LONDON-BASED TAMIL REVOLUTIONARY GROUP AND FROM THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION (PLO). SOME LTM MEMBERS MAY HAVE RECEIVED TRAINING ABROAD IN GUERRILLA WARFARE. IT IS A WELL DISCIPLINED SECRET ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO ACHIEVING

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ITS AIM THROUGH USE OF VIOLENCE.

3. LTM IS ALLEGEDLY RESPONSIBLE FOR A NUMBER OF ASSASSINATIONS AND ATTEMPTS, SUCH AS THE ONE ON M. CANAGARATNAM, MP FROM POTTUVIL, WHO CROSSED FROM THE TULF TO THE UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP), AND FOR ROBBERIES IN THE NORTH. IN APRIL, FOUR CID AGENTS REPORTEDLY INVESTIGATING LTM ACTIVITIES, WERE MUR-

DERED IN MANNAR DISTRICT. THREE OF THE CID OFFICERS WERE TAMIL, THEIR DRIVER SINHALESE. IN MAY, A TAMIL POLICE INSPECTOR IN JAFFNA WAS ASSASSINATED IN HIS HOME. HE, TOO, REPORTEDLY WAS INVESTIGATING LTM ACTIVITIES IN CONNECTION WITH BANK ROBBERIES. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS OF LTM THREATENING LETTERS TO ARMY OFFICERS.

4. ON APRIL 28, A LETTER PURPORTEDLY FROM THE LTM, CLAIMED RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEN DEATHS, INCLUDING THE MAY OF JAFFNA IN 1975 AND THE FOUR CID MEN KILLED IN APRIL, 1978, AND FOR THE ATTEMPT ON CANAGARATNAM'S LIFE IN JANUARY, 1978. THE LTM DENIED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ROBBERIES BUT SAID, "NO OTHER GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, OR INDIVIDUAL CAN CLAIM THESE (CID) DEATHS. SERIOUS ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST THOSE WHO CLAIM THE ABOVE OTHER THAN TIGERS IN CEYLON OR ABROAD."

5. GOVERNMENT MEASURES

SINCE THE CID MURDERS, THE POLICE HAVE ANNOUNCED PLANS TO WAGE ALL OUT WAR ON THE LTM, INCREASED ARMING OF POLICE, ESTABLISHING A WELL COORDINATED INTELLIGENCE NETWORK, AND SEARCH AND DESTROY OPERATIONS. REPORTEDLY ADDITIONAL POLICE ARE BEING SENT TO JAFFNA. A DEPUTY INSPECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE WAS SENT TO FRANCE FOR A COURSE IN ANTI-TERRORISM. POLICE WILL ESTABLISH TWO SPECIAL ANTI-TERRORIST COMBAT UNITS OF 200 HAND-PICKED MEN - ALL BACHELORS. ON MAY 10, POLICE AND ARMY OFFICERS WERE DEPLOYED TO JUNGLES IN NORTHERN AND NORTHERN

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WESTERN PROVINCE TO HUNT DOWN LTM.

6. COMMENT: IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS AMBASSADOR HAD WITH BOTH PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE AND MRS. BANDARANAIKE, THESE ACTS OF TERRORISM WERE HIGH ON THE AGENDA OF WORRIES OF BOTH. BOHA STRESSED THE GROWING CONNECTION BETWEEN JVP FORMER INSURGENTS AND RADICAL TAMILS, THOUGH MRS. BANDARANAIKE WAS THE MORE VEHEMENT SINCE SHE COULD BLAME JAYEWARDENE FOR HAVING RELEASED FROM JAIL THOSE MRS. BANDARANAIKE HAD JAILED.

7. AS WITH ANYTHING THAT TOUCHES THE SINHALESE-TAMIL COMMUNAL RELATIONS, LTM ACTIVITIES HAVE POTENTIAL TO SPARK COMMUNAL DISTURBANCES. THERE HAVE BEEN SPORADIC REPORTS OF CONTACTS BETWEEN TAMIL MILITANT GROUPS AND THE REVOLUTIONARY JANATHA VIMUKTHI PERAMUNA (JVP). GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN PUSHING LINE THAT LTM ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT OF OVERALL INSURGENT ACTIVITIES INCLUDING THE JVP, EMPLOYING THAT ACTS OF TERRORISM ARE UNRELATED TO GOVERNMENT'S INACTION IN MEETING TAMIL DEMANDS. THAT LTM TARGETS HAVE BEEN TAMILS AND NOT SINHALESE SUGGESTS TO SOME THAT LTM TOO IS STUDIOUSLY AVOIDING PRECIPITATING COMMUNAL CONFRONTATIONS.

8. THE RECENT ASSASSINATION OF POLICE OFFICIALS IS PROBABLY LTM REACTION TO INCREASED POLICE INVESTIGATIONS AND PURSUIT OF TAMIL MILITANTS. SINCE TAMIL POLICE WOULD ORDINARILY BE ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATE TAMILS IN TAMIL AREAS, NOT MUCH WEIGHT CAN BE GIVEN AT THIS TIME TO FACT THAT ASSASSINATED POLICE-MEN WERE TAMILS. SINCE THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT SATISFACTORILY RESOLVE ALL TAMIL GRIEVANCES AND SOME TAMILS ARE UNDERSTANDABLY INTIMIDATED BY TERRORIST ACTS NOT TO COOPERATE WITH THE POLICE, THE LTM WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO ENGAGE IN SPORADIC ACTS OF TERRORISM.

WRIGGINS

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